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# Reconciliation and Trust Building in Bosnia-Herzegovina

A Survey of Popular Attitudes in Four Cities and Regions



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Sarajevo, 2012



# Reconciliation and Trust Building in Bosnia-Herzegovina

A Survey of Popular Attitudes in Four Cities and Regions  
– Banja Luka, Bugojno, Mostar and Sarajevo –



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# 1. Executive Summary

*Data from 616 responses to a written questionnaire, respondents from a balance of national backgrounds in each of four regions across Bosnia-Herzegovina.*

### **Attitudes to reconciliation and trust-building across all four regions**

A. Peace, trust building and reconciliation are important goals: 88.2% affirmed that a process that builds trusting and honest relationships would be important for Bosnia-Herzegovina's future.

B. A trust-building process which focuses on the future received far greater support than a process focused on the past. However, approximately half of respondents were convinced public acknowledgement of past crimes is important for public trust in politicians.

C. Reconciliation and trust building are the responsibility of a wide range of social groups:

- Teachers and educational institutions are seen as of prime importance for trust building
- Non-nationalists and women are widely seen as important at a country-wide level, but not at local level
- Religious leaders are widely seen as important at a local level, but opinion over their national role is sharply divided. The importance of involving people of sincere religious commitments was not controversial, but this too was also affirmed by only a half of the respondents.

### **Differences associated with respondents' personal backgrounds**

A. The most striking differences in attitude towards reconciliation did not divide Croat, Bosniak and Serb respondents, or respondents from different cities, but divided responses given by respondents from the majority population of each city from responses given by minorities in those cities. Majorities from all cities expressed greater confidence in the prospects of a reconciliation process supported by public institutions and public figures than minorities did, and similarly affirmed special roles for religious actors and for women more than minority respondents did.

B. The greater the level of religious commitment and activity a respondent indicated, the more likely they were to express faith in the value of a reconciliation process.

C. Respondents in the four cities gave quite different responses to the importance of political and religious contributions to a reconciliation process, and also to the importance of the legacy of the war in a reconciliation process.

D. Wartime experience impacted on attitudes to the importance of a reconciliation process, though not on responses to questions about the means by which reconciliation should be achieved. Soldiers and civilians attributed greater importance to a reconciliation process than did those who were refugees, or those who answered that of these roles they had experienced 'all of the above' or 'none of the above' during the war.





## 2. The Design of the Study

The survey was conducted in November 2011 by teams in Sarajevo, Mostar, Bugojno and Banja Luka, chosen because each are major cities situated in distinctive regions in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Ethics approval for all aspects of the survey design and conduct was granted by the responsible Research Ethics Committee at the University of Edinburgh.

The 616 respondents were divided roughly evenly across the three main ethnic groups, across age cohorts, by gender, and by locality. The survey consequently does not reproduce the precise balance of perspectives in the population of Bosnia-Herzegovina according to the proportions of the population from Bosniak, Croat and Serb backgrounds, variously estimated in the last decade at 45-48%, 14.3-15% and 36-37.9% respectively. As will be seen in the detailed discussion of the significant regional divergences within each of the three main groups below, a survey which instead generalized about country-wide attitudes on the basis of samples selected according to their proportion in the population would not reliably provide a more accurate picture of national opinion. The survey team sought as near a balance of Bosniak, Croat and Serb respondents as was possible in each of the four localities in order to capture a reflection of minority as well as majority opinion. The number of Serbs in Mostar and Bugojno, and of Muslims and Croats in Banja Luka, is very small. Serb respondents were found in the villages around Mostar as well as the city itself. Two respondents were included in figures for Banja Luka from the village of Petricevac (very near Banja Luka), but otherwise enough Bosniak and Croat respondents were found in Banja Luka itself. Very few Serbs remain in Bugojno, and indeed very few are left in the Central Bosnian region

of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a whole. In order to present an impression of Serb opinion in that region, 38 respondents were found in towns in its vicinity.

Respondents were approached in a variety of public places to complete a written questionnaire, with versions in Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian, to be completed in their own hand, on a voluntary 'opt-in' basis. Respondents were not obliged to respond to all questions, and remained anonymous. Respondents were given the option not to identify with one of the three official national groups (0.8% chose this), or to indicate a different national identity (1.7%).

This survey was designed to encompass questions about the impact of personal circumstances on attitudes to reconciliation and trust-building, giving closer attention to the range of factors at stake than has been given in previous surveys. Questions also addressed a wider range of forms and objectives for transitional justice and reconciliation than has been attempted thus far. The survey data thus addresses debates about whether a trust-building process should be associated with political and religious elites, with historical judgements, with apologies by current leaders, with reconciliation, with social reconstruction or with justice.

Though relatively little surveying of popular attitudes towards this topic has been done, there are some very useful studies which have enduring value. In 2004, a major study indicating the decline of levels of trust and interethnic interaction in three localities during and particularly following the end of the war was published by Eric Stover and Harvey M. Weinstein (*My Neighbor, My Enemy: Justice and Community in the Aftermath of Mass Atrocity*,

Cambridge University Press). Marta Valinas, Stephen Parmentier and Elmar Weitekamp published *'Restoring Justice' in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Report of a Population-Based Survey* (Leuven, 2009), showing a degree of divergence between the three main religion-ethnic groups. The UNDP published its latest survey in 2011 (*Facing the Past and Access to Justice From a Public Perspective*) showing higher levels of support for transitional justice mechanisms amongst those with higher levels of education, and little divergence across ethnicity and gender.

Whereas each of these studies left questions about religion unasked, Gallup has published annual polls on religious identification in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and also included commentary on interethnic relations and religion in polling for the 2010 Gallup Balkan Monitor survey (*Focus on Bosnia*, November 2010). The Nansen Dialogue Centre has also pro-

vided a useful reminder of the strength of popular opposition to combining religion and politics in its survey *Leaving the Past Behind: The perceptions of youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2012).

The survey was designed to open research perspectives for more extensive work to be done on the topics treated here. The report in your hands is a summary of statistically-significant findings, designed in particular to stimulate reflection and debate. More detailed results will be published for the interest of specialists in the near future, and further work is planned following a period of consultations based on these findings.

This report does not draw inferences from the data about the work ahead for those who support particular forms of reconciliation activity, nor for those who will be asked to make political judgements about future trust-building steps.

## 3. What the Study Says About Popular Attitudes, in Greater Depth

### Country-wide responses

#### *Strong support for a trust-building process*

88.2% affirmed that a process building trusting and honest relationships would be important for BiH's future

85.4% believed it would be important for their locality

85.6% believed it would be important for the Former Yugoslavia

The strong support for such a process indicated here and in the further details which follow crosses the three communities, and it would not have been diminished by constructing the survey to reflect the smaller proportion of Croats and the greater numbers of Serb and Bosniak citizens in the population as a whole.

#### *Objectives of a trust-building process*

Asked what the focus of such a process should be, there was far greater support for building understanding between ordinary citizens and children than for expert examination of the experience and causes of the war, or for acknowledgement of actions taken in the war.

There was very strong support for a number of objectives for a trust building process which suggest a focus on the future, and much less emphatic support for reconciliation activities focused on the past. Nevertheless, approximately half of respondents supported focusing on historical issues. This can be seen in the figures which follow.

Asked whether a set of objectives were important (on a 0-4 scale) for confidence and trust building initiatives, responses were:

79.2% said peace was a very important objective (4/4),

12.1% said it was important (3/4).

72.9% said understanding was a very important objective (4/4),

18.5% said it was important (3/4)

74.7% said social progress was a very important objective (4/4),

15.9% said it was important (3/4)

72.1% said increased security was a very important objective (4/4),

16.9% said it was important (3/4)

71.6% said trust (*povjerenje*) was a very important objective (4/4),

19.1% said it was important (3/4)

68.2% said social renewal was a very important objective (4/4),

18.5% said it was important (3/4)

65.2% said reconciliation was a very important objective (4/4),

19.3% said it was important (3/4)

56.9% said establishing truth was a very important objective (4/4),

18.1% said it was important (3/4)

54.9% said constitutional changes was a very important objective (4/4),

18.1% said it was important (3/4)

54.3% said identification of liability/guilt was a very important objective (4/4),

18.2% said it was important (3/4)

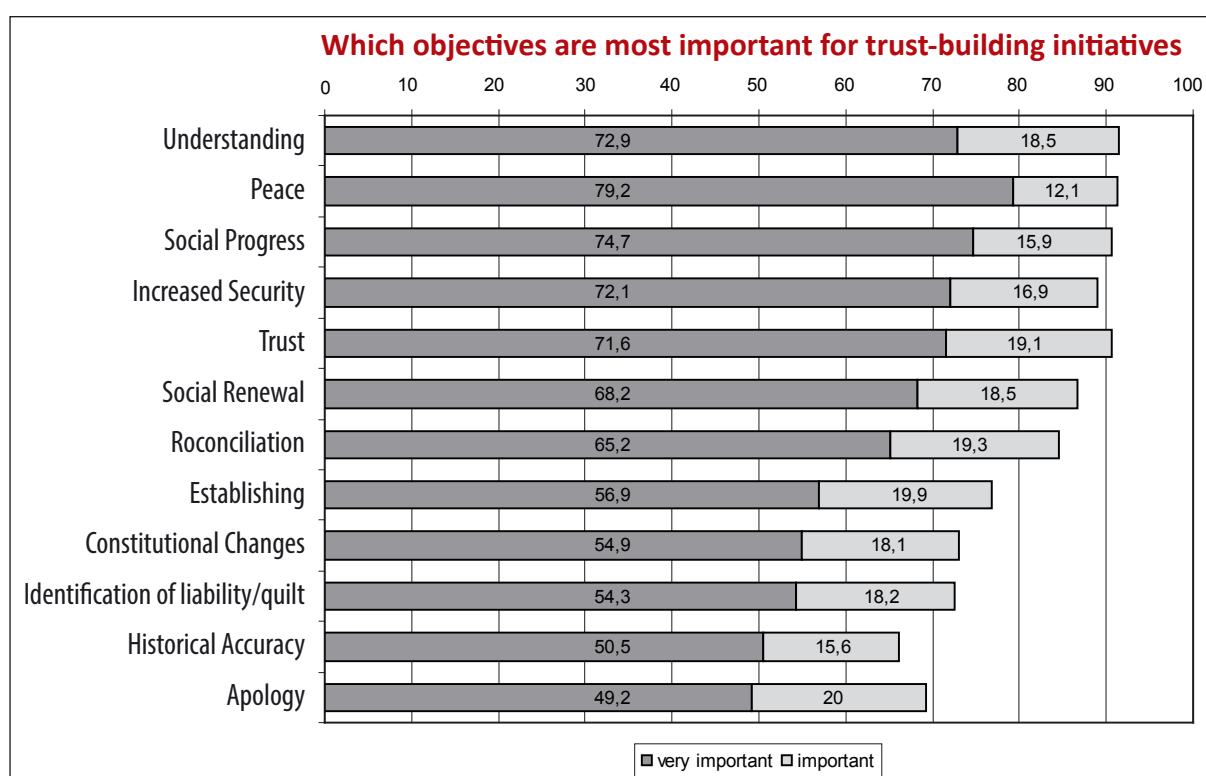
50.5% said historical accuracy was a very important objective (4/4),

15.6% said it was important (3/4)

49.2% said apology was a very important objective (4/4),

20% said it was important (3/4).

## Reconciliation and Trust Building in Bosnia-Herzegovina



The objectives which most respondents identified as very important were all more aspirational than the objectives which consistently received less '4' scores, which were focused on addressing past wrongs. However, these objectives, too, were deemed very important by half of the respondents. The practical importance of these objectives is also not to be dismissed. Thus, 53.7% stated that a public acknowledgement of responsibility for past actions is important for popular confidence in public figures.

The vagueness of some of the most popular aspirations demands attention. The popularity of 'peace' and 'understanding' could beg a host of questions about what is meant by these terms, what compromises or sacrifices would be merited in order to achieve them, and what significance these aspirations have in addressing the conflicts embedded in the country's political life. These are accompanied by other aspirational objectives which have very practical ramifications, such as 'in-

creased security'. By contrast with the historical objectives which received less emphatic responses, these higher scoring aspirational objectives also appear to be less overtly 'political': less closely tied to the political process, and less divisive.

One of the more aspirational objectives which international actors often use in approaching politics in Bosnia-Herzegovina is reconciliation. Local experts commonly report this to be seen locally as inappropriate – implying two sides that need to make up with each other – or unpopular for other reasons (it can be seen as vague, or implying an abandonment of personal and historic truths). In this survey, reconciliation was not the most popular objective, but it was more popular than processes focused on transitional justice. Reconciliation also shared with some of the other high scoring options a very low percentage of negative or unenthusiastic responses (scores of 1 or 2 rather than 3 or 4).

### 3. What the Study Says About Popular Attitudes, in Greater Depth

#### Who should lead such a process?

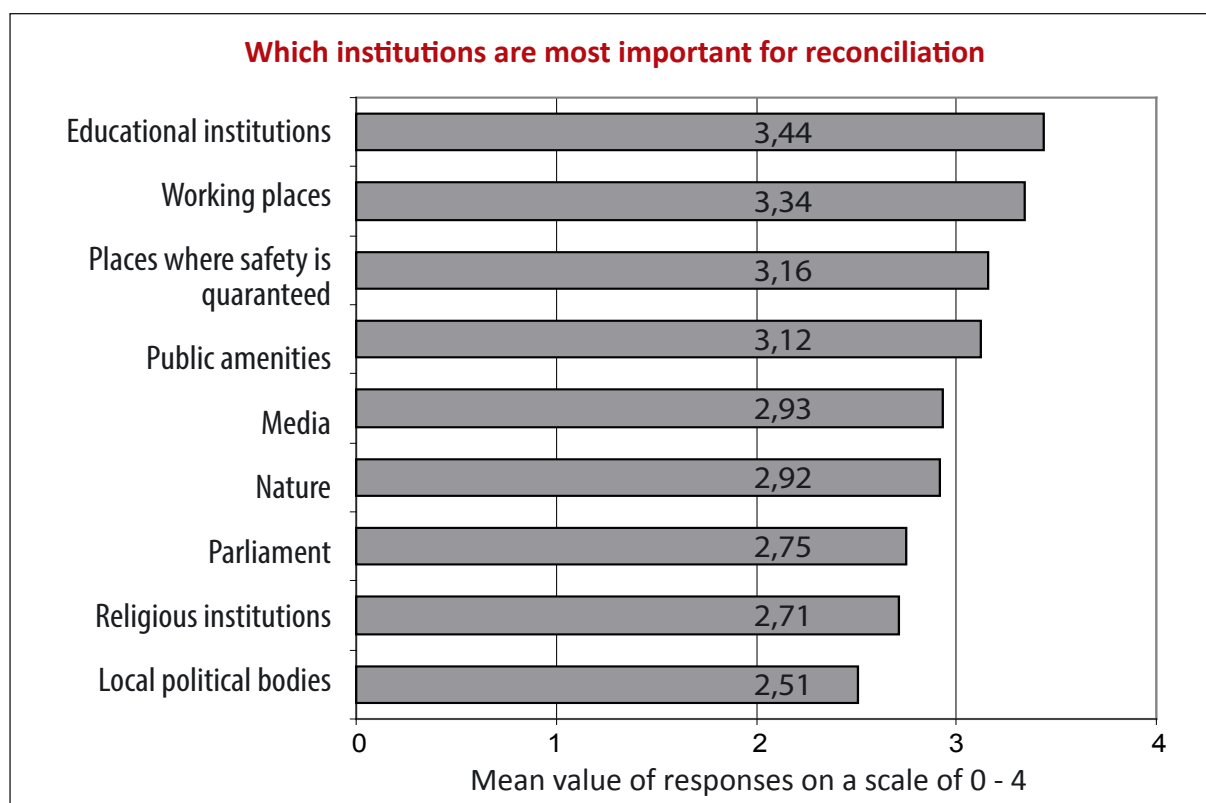
#### Where should it take place?

Teachers and educational institutions were seen as of prime importance for trust building; non-nationalists and women were widely seen as important at a country-wide level, but not at local level; religious leaders were widely seen as important at a local level, whereas opinion over their national role was sharply divided.

Asked which actors are important for building public trust or confidence (*povjerenje*) at the country-wide level, most faith was placed in non-nationalists and teachers, then “women rather than men”. Less faith was placed in reli-

gious leaders, victims’ groups, the lay faithful, and the least faith was placed in journalists and politicians. The middling level of support received by religious leaders at a national level is worth closer attention. It is a result reflecting an even split between the significant numbers placing faith in them and those placing little faith in them.

Asked which institutions were most important for reconciliation, educational and civic institutions were ranked highest, before places where safety is guaranteed and public amenities; all of which were more important than the media, nature, parliament, religious institutions and local political bodies.



At a local level, however, teachers, writers and religious leaders were said to be trusted, whereas non-nationalists were seen as being as untrustworthy as politicians. Similar results were received for a question about who is most important in the acknowledgement of what has happened in the past.

A complicated story underlies the responses given to questions about the involvement of religion in reconciliation. 56.6% of respondents indicated that they are personally very religious. Approximately half of respondents noted that they attend services regularly and about the same number do not, or do infre-

quently. The split over the role of religious leaders in reconciliation at a national level underlines the potential for controversy associated with the subject and the fact that there are very religious respondents who do not see a role for religion in a reconciliation process. The notion that sincere religious adherents had a special role to play was also affirmed by a fairly low proportion – 46.4% – of respondents. However, it was also dismissed by only 3.6% of the sample. There were thus some very religious respondents who did not agree that sincere religious adherents had a special role to play in a reconciliation process, and also a significant proportion of the non-religious and less religious respondents who did

not dismiss the notion of a special role for sincere religious adherents.

Respondents were also asked whether confessional religious education contributes to interreligious reconciliation. 31.0% said 'yes', 33.3% 'no', and 35.7% 'don't know'. Again, a substantial proportion of very religious respondents did not agree that confessional religious education contributes to interreligious reconciliation. A substantial proportion of non-religious or less religious respondents indicated that it did. The large proportion of 'don't knows' is significant. This is an issue which has received much public attention, and continues to be the subject of both disagreement and confusion amongst respondents of all backgrounds.

### Correlations between survey responses and personal background

Our survey posed a series of questions about a respondent's life history and current situation, before posing detailed questions about attitudes to the aims and format that local, national and regional efforts at reconciliation and trust-building should take. Participants were also asked to provide written explanations of their questionnaire responses, about obstacles to reconciliation, the role of religious education and their impact of their personal history on their attitudes. Respondents filled out written questionnaire forms themselves, and this naturally meant that a majority of respondents did not supply written comments at all points where this was requested. By contrast, the level of non-response to personal questions was very low, and where given a specific option not to state their nationality ('I do not want to answer') very few took this up.

The factors that correlated most strikingly with attitudes to a reconciliation process were religious commitment, location, and whether a respondent was living as part of a majority or a minority in their city and region.

These were more consistently important than particular national/ethnic/religious identities, averaged across the country. This meant:

- respondents who said they were more religious tended to favour reconciliation and peacebuilding initiatives more than respondents who said they were not religious
- for many questions, the responses of Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats living in a minority in Banja Luka, Bugojno, Mostar or Sarajevo shared more in common than they shared with respondents sharing an ethnic or national identity living in a city where they were part of a majority
- similarly, the responses of Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats living in a majority in Banja Luka, Bugojno, Mostar or Sarajevo often shared more in common than they shared with respondents sharing an ethnic or national identity living in a city where they were part of a minority.

These factors were more significant statistically than levels of education, gender, war-



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time experience or age. However, the distinctive interest in reconciliation of a higher than average proportion of older women and of veterans, crossing all three national groups, is also a striking feature of the results. What follows is a brief outline of the statistically significant correlations for the whole range of actors and institutions covered in the survey – including journalists, artists and intellectuals,

women, the natural environment – and not only for those whose role was affirmed by the largest number of respondents.

The results emphatically do not support the notion that in their attitudes to reconciliation and trust-building the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina are divided into ideologically-opposed national-religious camps.

#### Personal attitude to religion affected attitude to reconciliation

Respondents were asked to identify their personal attitude to religion with one of five statements, with the following results: 'a) Religion is very important in my life' received 56.6% of responses; 'b) Religion is an important part of my personal life' received 11.6%; 'c) Religion has little meaning in my life' 17.8%; 'd) I am not religious but identify with the religious community I attend' 5.7%; and 'e) I am not at all religious' 8.3%. 3 respondents did not answer the question.

The categories may be taken as a scale of decreasing (or increasing) degrees of 'religiosity' where this is taken to mean a commitment to the role of religion in an individual's public and private life. It is not a straightforward scale indicating levels of faith or piety, and it need not be the case that a respondent indicating 'b) Religion is an important part of my personal life' is any less 'religious' than respondents choosing 'a) Religion is very important in my life'. There may be a proportion of respondents who exaggerated their level of religious identification, or who exaggerated their distance from religion, a phenomenon reported in other polls. These results can nevertheless be seen below to correlate with responses to a range of questions about reconciliation: the higher the level of significance given to religion by a survey respondent, the more likely

he or she was to affirm the importance of reconciliation.

The correlation of attitudes to reconciliation with levels of involvement in religious activity was indicated by a separate question, treated in the next section.

**Religion.** The scale of responses to this question about religious identification correlates with levels of trust in religion as a factor in reconciliation.

- Consequently, knowing a respondent's characterisation of their attitude to religion made their judgements about the impact of religious figures on reconciliation-related activities more predictable. In some senses, this is no surprise. Nevertheless, as has been noted above, personal attitudes to religion are not wholly reliable indicators of respondents' attitudes to the role of religious actors in reconciliation work: some very religious respondents did not affirm the importance of these actors, while some non-religious respondents did affirm their importance, particularly at the local level.
- Similarly, religious sites and institutions were deemed more important as venues for reconciliation-related activities by the more religious than by the less or the non-religious.



- Confessional religious education was deemed to have a positive effect on reconciliation by a greater proportion of religious than non-religious respondents. The one exception to this was the fact that religious and non-religious Bosniak respondents were not divided in their attitude to the impact of religious education on public attitudes to reconciliation activities conducted at the city level.
- The impact of religious identification on attitudes to reconciliation was particularly striking for religious Croats, but also important in the responses given by religious Serbs. It was evident in all cities except Mostar, where increasing religiosity made no difference.
- Increasing religiosity correlated with a greater level of credit given to the role of religious leaders in Bugojno and Sarajevo, but not in Banja Luka, where it correlated instead with greater credit given to the potential role of lay believers in reconciliation.

**Teachers.** Faith in the role of teachers in promoting reconciliation was not uniform across the population, and religion was a factor in the divisions between sectors of the population. Religious Serbs placed less trust in the role of teachers than in the role of religious figures in reconciliation, and this was not true of religious Bosniak or Croat respondents. In Sarajevo and in Mostar, taking all three groups together, increasing religiosity correlated with increasing respect for the role of teachers in promoting reconciliation.

**Journalists.** Those who claimed a higher level of religious identification in Bugojno and its region expressed greater faith in the role of journalists. Religion was not a significant factor in attitudes to the role of journalists in the other cities covered.

**Parliament and politics.** Respondents indicating a greater level of religious identification also attributed greater levels of importance for the trust building role of Parliament and of local political bodies than less religious respondents did.

**Organisations representing victims and citizens.** Religious Serbs gave less credit to organisations representing victims or other groups of citizens as potential forces for reconciliation than they gave to religious figures, and this set their responses apart from those given by less religious or non-religious Serbs. Religion was not a significant factor distinguishing the attitudes of Bosniaks and Croats to these bodies.

**Non-nationalists.** Respondents were asked to rate the importance of non-nationalists for progress in reconciliation at the city and BiH levels, and the results were different across the religious and non-religious populations of each national community. Mostar Croats, whether religious or not religious, gave a low rank to the importance of non-nationalists for reconciliation. Nationally, religious Croats rated non-nationalists more highly, though in thinking of reconciliation within their city they were equally unappreciative, as were Bosniaks. Generalising across the four regions, non-religious Serbs were more appreciative of non-nationalists in thinking of city affairs than in giving responses about reconciliation at the state level. In sum, religious and geographical factors would complicate most attempts to generalize about the attitudes of Bosniaks, of Croats or of Serbs across the country.

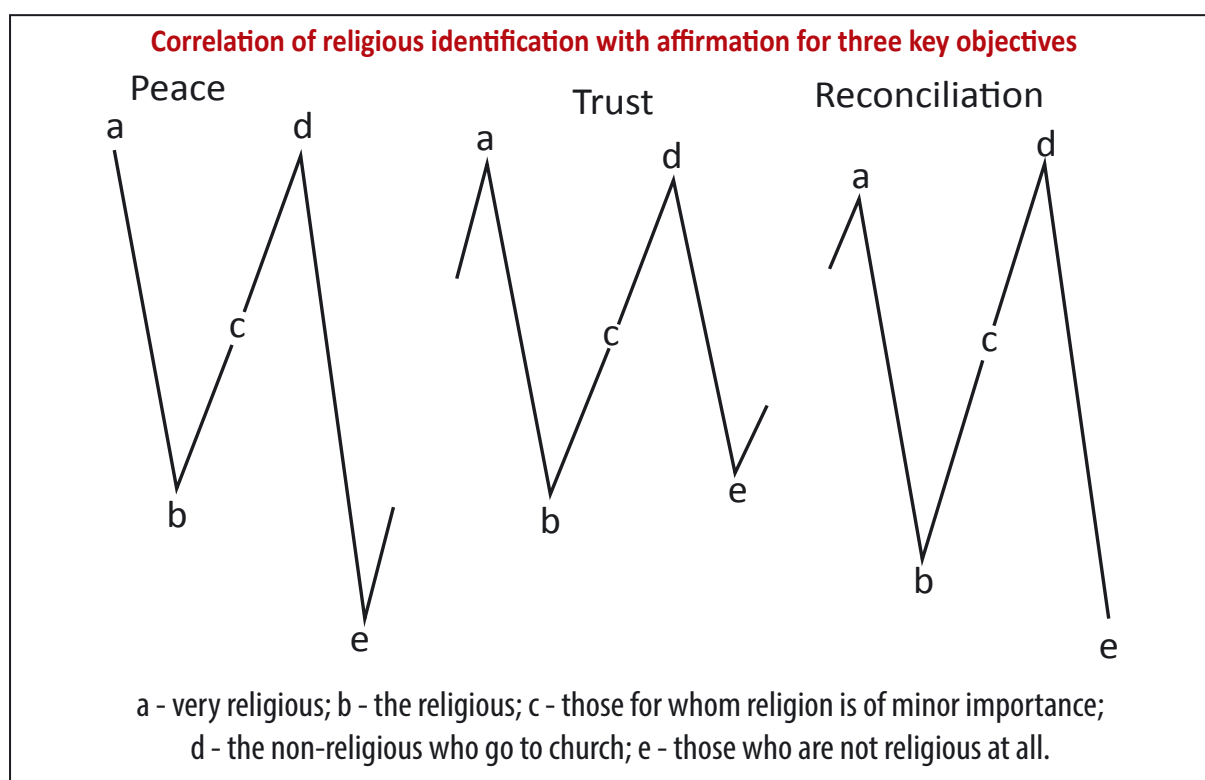
**Those who identify with the majority community.** Respondents were asked to rate the importance for reconciliation, at city and state levels, of people 'who identify with the majority community'. No further guidance on what this meant was given, though respondents may have read this as a contrast to the

### 3. What the Study Says About Popular Attitudes, in Greater Depth

question about ‘non-nationalists’ preceding it. In Bugojno and in Banja Luka, increasing religiosity correlated with more respect for the potential of this category, both at city- and at state-wide levels.

#### A reconciliation process

- Greater religiosity correlated with the expression of greater levels of confidence in the prospects of a successful reconciliation process improving living conditions at both city and BiH levels.
- Degrees of religious identification also tallied with the strength of affirmations of
- the importance of a series of objectives (peace, trust, reconciliation) for successful confidence-building. The results did not follow a completely straightforward linear fashion, but a pattern clearly divides the very religious from the non-religious: The very religious (a) were most affirmative in their responses, then the non-religious who go to church (d), then those for whom religion is of minor importance (c), then the religious (b) and finally those who are not religious at all (e).
- Conditions for a reconciliation process to make a positive impact were viewed differ-



ently by respondents who had indicated different levels of personal religiosity. Very religious Croats (group a) were most likely to affirm that a reconciliation process should not interfere with the conduct of trials for war criminals, and very religious Bosniaks were also markedly stronger in their concern for the trial of war criminals than were non-religious Bosniaks. Support

amongst Serbs for the contention that a process should change attitudes to the character of the war of the 1990s also divided respondents between the religious (b), who affirmed this most strongly, and both the very religious (a) and the non-religious (e), who both attributed less importance to this objective.

- Greater religious identification did not mark responses to a question about the importance of public acknowledgements of past responsibility – whereas levels of religious involvement did (treated in the

next section below). Religious involvement was also a more significant indicator than level of religious identification was for judgements about what focus a reconciliation process should have.

### The impact of involvement in a religious community on attitude to reconciliation

Involvement in a religious community impacted on still more responses than the simple indication of levels of personal religiosity did. Because of this, the survey data seems to suggest a social dimension to the correlation between religious identification and support for reconciliation initiatives. Attitudes to reconciliation are not simply a reflection of the different preferences of respondents who happen to be religious or not religious.

Respondents asked to describe their level of involvement in the life of the local religious community responded as follows: a) 19.7% were regularly active in their local religious community; b) 24.6% were sometimes active and regularly attend church/mosque; c) 35.7% were not very active but sometimes attend church/mosque; and d) 20% were not active and do not attend church/mosque. The relatively even spread across categories helps to make this question a more useful gauge for assessing correlations than the preceding question about the importance of religion to respondents, for which 56% noted religion was very important in their lives. Here, we are able to distinguish more between those who see themselves as active and those who see themselves as passive if regular attenders. It also leads to some conclusions which contradict the general pattern for individual religiosity, as is noted below with respect to attitudes to the importance of teachers as forces for reconciliation.

This distinction deserves further research before judgements about the correlation between religious activity and attitudes to reconciliation can be securely made. Further investigation of the influence of local religious community life on attitudes to reconciliation and trust-building could hold out very practical gains for practitioners and policy-makers alike.

**Religion.** There was a general pattern in responses to questions according to which involvement in a religious community correlates with a higher rating for the role of religious leaders and lay believers in reconciliation work. When given the opportunity to distinguish between reconciliation at national and at city level, this correlation was more obvious at city level (in Banja Luka just for lay believers; in Sarajevo and Bugojno just for religious leaders).

**Non-nationalists.** The survey results suggest it would be unwise to assume that the more religious fiercely reject those outside their 'own' nationalist camp. Involvement in a religious community actually correlated with a higher rating for the role of non-nationalists working for reconciliation at city level than non-religious respondents accorded them. This is as true in Mostar as in the other cities, even though Mostar is the city in which respondents were the least affirmative about the role of non-nationalists as contributors to reconciliation at the national level.

### 3. What the Study Says About Popular Attitudes, in Greater Depth

**Politicians.** Involvement in a religious community correlated with a higher degree of affirmation of the potential role of local politicians and of the role of local political institutions. This is not simply limited to majority communities. This general pattern might also suggest a connection between religious affiliation and levels of trust in local political approaches to reconciliation, a point which merits further research.

**People who identify with the majority community.** This category was more appreciated by the religiously-involved in Banja Luka and in Sarajevo than by others in those cities. Further investigation would be needed to indicate how far this reflects attitudes to national politics, and how far this is instead a reflection of more purely social considerations. The survey data did not reveal other patterns which would suggest why this was noticeable in Banja Luka and Sarajevo but not in Bugojno and Mostar (though a loose parallel exists with the differences between cities over the potential role in reconciliation work of religious people and sincere believers, elaborated further below).

**Teachers/educational institutions.** Teachers were more appreciated by the religiously-involved in Bugojno than by the less or non-religious. However, across the country the more religiously active were less likely to see educational institutions as important for reconciliation. This seems to be in contrast with data for religiosity above, for which the half of the sample who identified religion as very important to them saw educational institutions as being important locations for reconciliation work.

**How reconciliation processes should be designed.** Degrees of involvement in a local religious community offered interesting correlations with attitudes to how reconciliation activities should be conceived. When

asked about the importance of a reconciliation process, this factor had a greater statistical impact than responses to the preceding question about the importance of religion in an individual's life. By contrast, when asked about objectives for a reconciliation process, responses to the two questions were equally significant.

- The importance of a reconciliation process (at all levels, BiH, FRY and in a respondent's own locality) was most frequently affirmed by those who were sometimes active at religious services; those who were regularly active were then less widely affirmative; and those who were infrequently or not religiously-active were strongest in stating that a reconciliation process would not make a difference. This pattern was stronger when asked about reconciliation activities at a local level, as was also true of the correlations associated with the data on the importance of religion to an individual.
- Asked whether a reconciliation process should focus on public acknowledgements addressing the legacy of past events, those more involved in a religious community placed less weight on this than respondents did who were less involved or not involved.
- The more religiously active were also less interested in encouraging children to talk about what might be their shared expectations about the future (though the opposite had been suggested by the data on religiosity).
- The less involved were less likely to affirm the need for a reconciliation process to reveal more about the past or to show what is necessary for coexistence. A split along communal lines was evident here: less religious Bosniaks valued the coexistence option more highly and less religious Croats gave emphasis to showing that people condemn war crimes.

- What exactly motivated less religious respondents to rate the importance of reconciliation work less highly demands further investigation. It might be inferred that those respondents with less or no religious involvement believe they have greater reason to be more sceptical about the value of reconciliation work in the current conditions in Bosnia-Herzegovina than their religious compatriots do. The data here does not indicate on which grounds such scepticism could rest – while some might be more sceptical of the political constellations at work in the country, another option might suggest respondents who not believe reconciliation to be necessary, and

another possibility still might suggest the belief that it is not appropriate.

**The significance of reconciliation activities conducted in public spaces, places in which security is guaranteed, and workplaces.** The more religiously active gave less affirmation to each of these than the less religious respondents did. This reinforces the general conclusion noted above that there social factors behind the correlations between the data on religious involvement and attitudes towards reconciliation, rather than purely individual judgements or aspirations for change in the country.

### **A respondent's place of residence was a significant factor in differences over the role of religious actors, politicians and the role of the past in reconciliation work**

One of the most frequently significant factors revealed in the results was a divergence between the four cities and regions covered in the survey. There is a nuanced story to be told here. Some responses clearly related to local ethnic relationships and to majority-minority differences, to religious affiliation, and to degrees of religiosity and religious involvement. These complications meant that the results were not simply indicating a straightforward difference between cities, such as 'religion is far more important an influence on attitudes to reconciliation in Mostar than it is in Sarajevo'. The differences between data from the four cities instead suggest that the diversity of opinion within each city is strongly related to the local social and political contexts experienced by residents.

**Religion.** Respondents from the four cities gave significantly different answers to questions about the role of religious actors in reconciliation. When asked whether religious

figures and lay believers should have a special role in state-wide reconciliation activities, residents of Mostar and Banja Luka were more affirmative than residents of Bugojno/ the central region and Sarajevo. The same pattern marked responses to questions about the importance of religious institutions and confessional religious education. By contrast, in thinking of the importance of religious people playing a role in reconciliation activities in their own city, residents in Mostar and Bugojno were the most positive. However, when asked about the potential contribution of people who are sincere believers, this was most valued in Banja Luka, significantly less highly valued in Sarajevo and Bugojno, and again significantly less highly valued in Mostar. Only in Sarajevo was there a consistent response to questions about all types of religious actors. Across the country as a whole, however, 'religion' is not necessarily understood by respondents in the same way, and



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the importance of religious actors is not seen through a single prism.

**Politics.** Attitudes to the role of politicians were strikingly negative across the country, but there were also interesting divergences in responses given in the four cities. In responding to a question about the role of politicians in reconciliation at the national level, Sarajevans were most negative. They were also most negative about the importance of Parliament as a location for reconciliation work. When asked about reconciliation at the city level, the role of politicians was equally depreciated in Sarajevo and Bugojno. Nevertheless, Bugojno respondents were the most clearly emphatic about the need for an encounter between politicians in office today as well as those responsible in the 1990s. More nu-

ance for Bugojno can be seen from the ethnic breakdown given in the next section: the Bosniak majority is more positive about the role to be played by politicians at the city level than the minorities are.

**Examining the past.** When asked to appraise the value of a process engaging clearly with the past, this was most frequently appreciated in Sarajevo, and least in Mostar. Nevertheless, respondents from the Croat majority in Mostar clearly affirmed the need for an investigation into the causes of the war. Mostar residents as a whole were most positive about an examination of the causes of the war, though they were the least positive about the importance of a process establishing historical accuracy and the truth.

#### Ethnic/national identification

Ethnic/national identification correlated significantly with responses to almost a half of the questions asked. However, the data does not suggest Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks generally held contrasting attitudes to reconciliation – it often suggested instead that attitudes were more determined by life as part of an ethnic majority or ethnic minority in a city. Croat, Serb and Bosniak respondents tended to share attitudes to the manner and prospects of a reconciliation process where they lived as part of a majority population, and those who lived in a city where they could be seen to be part of a minority equally shared a striking amount of perspectives in common.

**Religion.** Ethnic majorities tended to value the role of religion more than minorities did.

- Religious Croats valued the role of religious figures more than religious Bosniaks or Serbs did.
- Non-religious Croats, by contrast, did not differ significantly in their responses from other non-religious respondents.
- However, Mostar Croats as a whole were more positive about the role of lay believers than minorities in the city were, Bosniaks in the city being the least likely to place faith in the role of lay believers.
- Mostar Croats were also more positive about the potential role of religion and religious institutions than the majority populations of the other cities were, Bosniaks in Bugojno being the least positive of all majorities on this point.
- In Banja Luka, the Serb majority placed more faith in the impact of religious leaders, lay believers and religious institutions than the minorities did.
- As a result, it would be a mistake to conclude that the general pattern was that Croats were more positive about the role

of religious figures and lay believers across the country.

- We see the influence of minority-majority perspectives again with respect to attitudes to the potential contribution of sincere believers amongst Bosniak respondents in Sarajevo. In Sarajevo, Bosniak respondents valued the contribution of sincere believers more than the other ethnic groups; in the other cities, including in Bugojno, the reverse was true.

### Non-nationalists

- Majorities tended to place more faith in the potential role of non-nationalists than minorities did. In the minds of the majority populations at least, nationalism does not close these four cities to the potential role of non-nationalists.
- Serb respondents had the lowest regard for non-nationalists when considered across BiH. However, a comparison across local majorities reveals that
  - Croats in Mostar rated them by far the lowest;
  - the potential role of non-nationalists was significantly more appreciated amongst Muslims in Bugojno, and they were rated more highly again by Serbs in Banja Luka;
  - and Bosniaks in Sarajevo rated them highest.
- The regional diversity within the sample of Serb respondents again underlines how inadequate it would be to simply divide respondents into national camps.
- In Mostar, minority respondents were more likely to credit the role of non-nationalists in reconciliation activities at city level than Croats were. This would be equally lost in a survey dividing the three national communities across the country without regard to local contexts.

**Citizens and victims groups.** Serb respondents appreciated the potential role of these groups less than Croat and Bosniak respondents did.

**Teachers and educational institutions.** Majorities tended to place more faith in the potential role of teachers than minorities did, and there were also some differences in attitude across ethnic groups. Serb respondents appreciated the potential role of teachers less than other respondents did. Bosniaks as a whole were more positive about the role of educational institutions in reconciliation than the other two nationalities were. In Sarajevo, the Bosniak majority appreciated the potential impact of teachers more than minorities did, and more than the majority populations of other cities appreciated them. Clearly current schooling systems might play some role in differentiating attitudes to teachers, although strictly the questions asked related to their potential rather than their actual roles. Further investigation is planned for the coming year.

**Women.** There were no general divergences over the potential role of women across national groups, save in Sarajevo. Here, the Bosniak majority appreciated the potential role of women more than minorities did.

**Politicians and Parliament.** The data does not support the assumption that could easily be made that majorities would naturally support politicians more than minorities, particularly small minorities, would. There was some divergence across the national communities. Bosniaks placed most faith in Parliament as a site for reconciliation, and Serbs placed least faith in it. The Bosniak majority in Bugojno placed more faith in the role of politicians in reconciliation *at city level* than minorities did. This brings nuance to the data for Bugojno provided above under the section on divergences between respondents living in the

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four cities selected. There, it was noted that respondents in Bugojno and its vicinity placed less faith in the role of politicians at city level than at BiH level. Most strikingly, in Mostar, minority respondents were more likely to credit the role of politicians at city level than Croats were.

**Media.** Bosniaks placed more weight on the role of the media in reconciliation than other nationalities did. In Banja Luka, the majority (Serbs) were more favourable to the role of the media than members of ethnic minorities were.

**Public spaces.** Bosniaks placed more weight on the role of public spaces in reconciliation than other nationalities did.

#### **Attitudes to the aims and format used for a reconciliation process.**

Respondents of all three nationalities saw the reasons for reconciliation and affirmed the importance of taking reconciliation work seriously. The general pattern was for minorities to take this more seriously – with majorities grouped as a whole taking media, religious sites, educational institutions and public spaces more seriously than minorities did when viewed as a group.

There were also some differences across national groups, and Mostar in particular offered some interesting exceptions to the general pattern noted here.

- A higher proportion of Bosniaks cared about public acknowledgement of public figures' wartime responsibility than was true of other groups, then Croats, then Serbs.
- Ethnicity did not generally make a statistical difference to attitudes to the importance of a reconciliation process, save in Mostar. There, a higher proportion of Croat respondents affirmed the importance of a reconciliation process than was true of minorities in the city.
- Bosniaks were more supportive than other nationalities of three types of reconciliation initiative, respectively involving ordinary people, children and experts. Croats favoured engaging children in reconciliation work more than Serbs did, Serbs favoured engaging experts more than Croats did.
- There was a relatively low level of statistical significance behind a pattern according to which Bosniak respondents regarded the importance of reconciliation, constitutional changes, and historical accuracy as more important than Croat respondents did, and they in turn regarded these as more important than Serb respondents did. The greatest difference in the opinions of the minority and majority populations was in Mostar, where a higher proportion of Croat respondents focused on addressing questions relating to the past than was true of the minorities.

#### **Age**

Age was not a consistently decisive factor in the overall make-up of our survey responses, and was markedly less important than religious involvement or majority-minority differences were. However, age did affect responses

to a good number of questions, often at a low level of significance. There were a number of questions for which older women, or older religious people and older non-religious people, had distinctive views favouring particular mod-



els of reconciliation process. Younger people were only more interested in a reconciliation process bringing some public accountability for those responsible in the 1990s.

Age cohorts were set at 16-30, 31-50, and 51-87.

**Parliament.** From age 30 upwards, female respondents became increasingly affirmative of the role of Parliament in reconciliation.

**Non-nationalists.** Older women gave greater weight to the role of non-nationalists in reconciliation work at the BiH level, as did older religious respondents. However, in thinking of the role of non-nationalists in reconciliation activities at the city level, older, very religious respondents were less positive about non-nationalists than other groups. In reflecting on the role of non-nationalists in reconciliation work at the city level, those older people who were most religious and those older people who were most secular had the least faith of any age group in the role of non-nationalists.

**Organisations representing citizens and victims.** Among the non-religious, increasing age correlated with decreasing appreciation of the BiH-wide role of these organisations. In reflecting on reconciliation work at the city level, the very religious showed decreasing faith in groups representing victims with increasing age.

**Teachers.** With increasing age, the non-religious gave less weight to the role of teachers in reconciliation. This group as a whole gave less weight to the role of teachers than the more religious respondents did.

**People identified with the majority.** With increasing age, the non-religious gave less weight to the importance for reconciliation work of practitioners who are identified with the majority. Above, it was seen that in two cities, Bugojno and Banja Luka, non-religious respondents as a whole were also less likely

to affirm the role of teachers than more religious respondents were.

**Religious figures and lay believers.** Age played no role in distinguishing attitudes to who is important for reconciliation at the BiH level. Responding to questions about which actors are important for reconciliation activities at the city level, only the non-religious respondents gave distinct responses according to their ages: older non-religious respondents indicated less faith in the role of religious leaders than younger non-religious respondents did.

**The process of reconciliation.** With increasing age, respondents were more supportive of a reconciliation process which involves:

- a serious encounter among current political leaders (though support amongst women decreased sharply after age 30, so this result reflects the strength of support for such an encounter amongst male respondents),
- enabling ordinary people to understand each other better,
- the contribution of sincere believers (while amongst men support for sincere believers decreased with age, this was more than offset by the strong increase in support amongst women) and
- the contribution of people who can understand the different attitudes and views of different communities (this was particularly true of men).
- With increasing age, respondents were less inclined to support a reconciliation process designed to address explanations for the events of the 1990s.

### The goals of a reconciliation process

Trust, or confidence (*povjerenje*), and peace were slightly more important to respondents with increasing age. This was particularly clear for women's responses.

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Women were also slightly more likely to value apology with age, and progress was valued most by the youngest and oldest female respondents.

With increasing age, female respondents gave increasing weight to a reconciliation process which demonstrates that most people in BiH condemn the war crimes committed by their own peoples and which indicates what people believe to be needed for good co-existence.

**The importance of wartime experience.** Older women who were civilians in the war were slightly more likely than younger female civilians to agree that their experience formed their position towards reconciliation. Age made no difference to the importance of personal experience for other groups in forging attitudes to reconciliation.

**Media.** The strongest indication of the importance of the media for reconciliation came from the 31-50 age group.

**Cultural figures (artists, musicians etc).** Amongst religious respondents, there was a relatively low level of correlation between increasing age and increasing levels of appreciation for the role of cultural figures in BiH-wide reconciliation. Asked about reconciliation activities at city level, age only differentiated responses among the non-religious who sometimes attended religious services: in this group, older respondents were less appreciative of cultural figures than younger respondents were.

**Nature.** Older women were more affirmative of the role of nature in reconciliation than the middle age cohort, and these women tended to be more affirmative of the role of nature than younger women did.

#### Gender

Gender was not a consistently decisive factor in this survey. However, men and women had different responses to a number of questions. As we have seen under the section on 'Age' above, there were some factors to which older respondents, and especially older women, give markedly greater weight in thinking about reconciliation, a few of which might have been predicted, some not.

**Non-nationalists.** Older women were more likely to appreciate the potential role of non-nationalists at city and BiH levels.

**Cultural figures.** Older women were slightly more likely to appreciate the potential importance for BiH-wide reconciliation of actors, musicians and other artists or intellectuals.

**Teachers and educational institutions.** In city-level reconciliation activities, with in-

creasing age men tended to appreciate teachers more.

**Women.** The role of women was valued more highly by women than by men in city-level reconciliation work, though not at the national level, in all cities save Bugojno. As was noted above, nationality correlated with divergent attitudes to the role of women only in Sarajevo, where the Bosniak majority appreciated the potential role of women more than minorities did.

**Citizens groups.** Mostar women rated citizens groups more highly than Mostar men did.

**Different focuses for reconciliation.** Women were more likely to value initiatives involving children. Serb and Croat men were more negative than women were about initiatives involving those who bore official responsibility

in the 1990s. Amongst Bosniaks, this was reversed. In Bugojno, women were less positive than men were about a range of options for reconciliation processes:

- the contribution of believers,
- the contribution of people who can understand different viewpoints,
- the liability of figures from the 1990s, and
- initiatives involving children.

Women emphasised more strongly the importance of the following objectives for a reconciliation process:

- security;
- reconstruction,
- peace,
- trust
- understanding,
- apology and
- constitutional change.

### **Workplaces, public spaces, and nature.**

Women were more affirmative about the value of these for reconciliation than men were.

## Education

Level of education made little impact on responses to survey questions, with some exceptions. It was, by contrast, a significant factor noted in UNDP's 2010 study of attitudes to transitional justice, *Facing the Past and Access to Justice From a Public Perspective*.

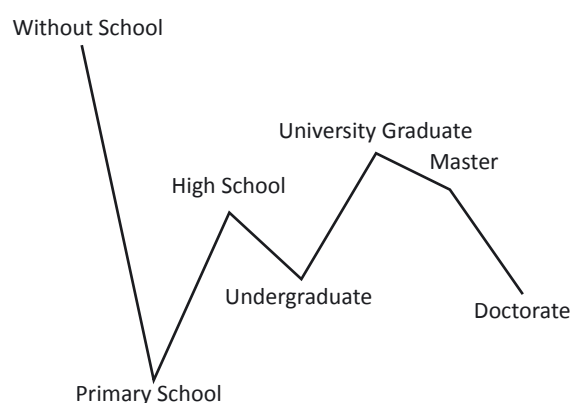
**Religion.** The contribution of sincere believers was more widely valued by the less educated than the more educated. The importance of religious institutions in building confidence was ranked lowest among those with only primary school education, it increases slightly for those with higher levels of school education, rose to a peak for those who were university-educated, before then decreasing for those past Master's degree education.

**The process of reconciliation.** The earlier a respondent had left education, the more they tended to value peace as an objective for a trust-building process. The more educated placed greater value on a focus on the causes of war. The more educated also placed more value on a process which would change perspectives on the character of the war.

**Media.** Increasing education and increasing appreciation of the role of the media in reconciliation correlated.

**Education.** Higher levels of education coincided with increased appreciation for the importance of educational institutions.

### **Correlation between level of education and affirmation of the importance of religious institutions**



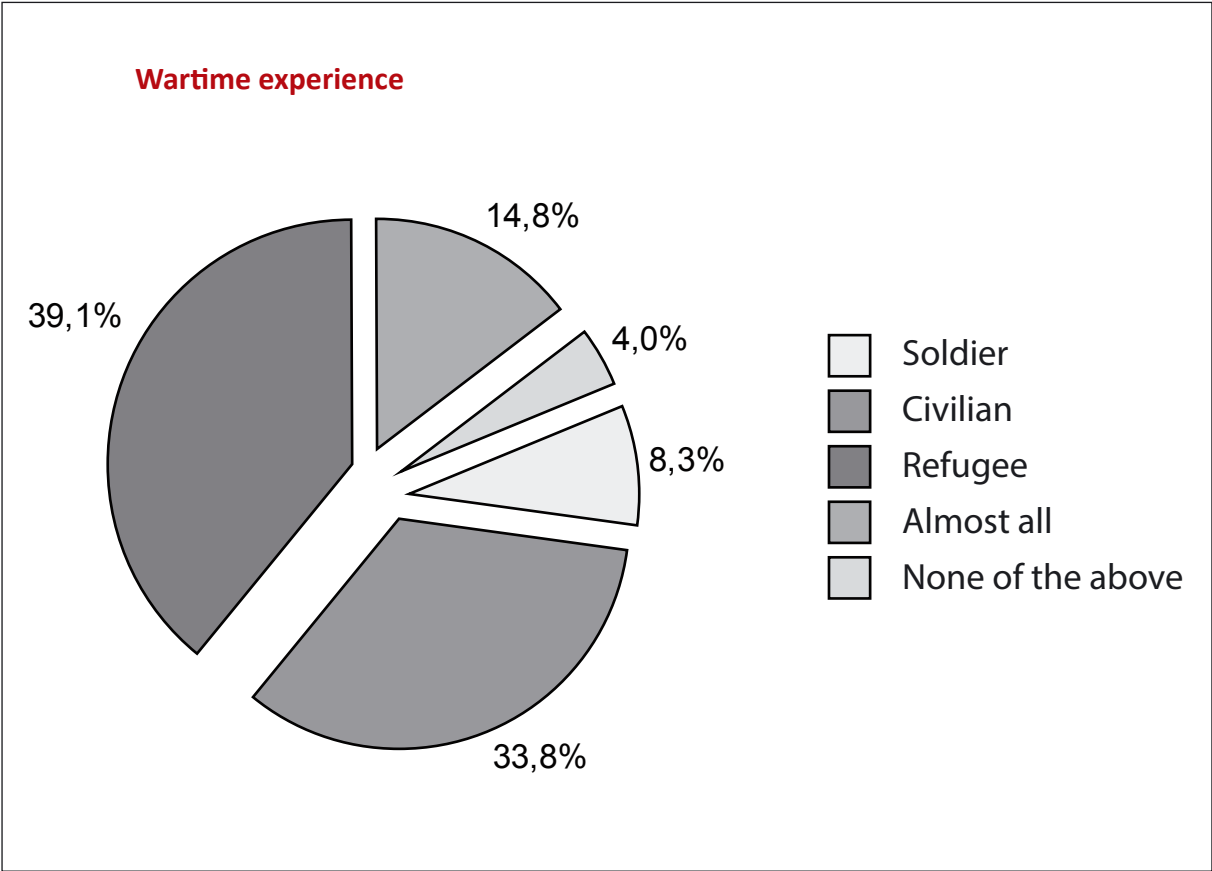
Wartime experience

Respondents were asked to describe their wartime experience: 8.3% responded ‘soldier’; 33.8% ‘civilian’; 39.1% ‘refugee’; 14.8% ‘almost all’; and 4.0% ‘none of the above’.

Wartime experience did not make a consistent impact across the responses to survey

questions, but there were some interesting patterns in responses to a few questions, all focused on the importance of a reconciliation process.

Where asked about the importance of public acknowledgements focused on the past,



those who entered ‘none of the above’ cared least about such acknowledgements. Next came those who identified with almost all the roles, then refugees, then civilians, and soldiers cared most of all.

Soldiers and civilians attributed greater importance to a reconciliation process encompassing the entire former Yugoslav territory

than refugees or those who answered ‘all of the above’ or ‘none of the above’, and the same was evident where asked to judge whether a formal process of reconciliation would be important if it contributed to learning about what is necessary for coexistence. Asked about progress in reconciliation at city or BiH levels, this pattern was not pronounced enough to identify as significant.



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